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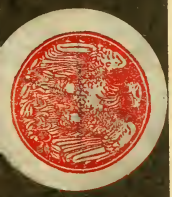

Christmas Eve In The City

John Mills Gilbert

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CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE CITY

BY

JOHN MILLS GILBERT

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TO

THE RADIANT MEMORY OF

MY MOTHER

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CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE CITY

It's O for the calm of the free open spaces!
It's O for the fields and the flocks I am sighing!
There's small room for Christmas in life's crowded places,—
Always passing of feet,—always glimpsing of faces,—
I would I were out with the shepherds a-lying!

Out there 'neath the skies strewn with stars I'd lie dreaming,
And see the blue midnight break through with God's glory;
Where heav'n is not dimmed by the street-lights a gleaming,
And far from the throngs who so ceaselessly streaming
Have no time nor heart for the true Christmas story!

It's O for the stillness, with soft breaths to move it,
The stir of the wind, and the rustle of grasses!
Then, voices of Angels in gladness above it—
Their promise of peace, how I long for and love it,
And pray for God's gift, which all knowledge surpasses!

"BETHLEHEM-EPHRATAH"

There in the crowded little town
  The Son of Man was born.
Close clustered roofs and narrow streets,
  With stones well-trod and worn,
Spread round Him, where He lay and smiled
  That first bright Christmas morn.

'Twas where the fields stretched broad and still
  Beneath a starry sky,
The shepherds woke in startled fear
  To see an Angel by,
And heard the hosts of heaven sing:
  "Glory to God on high!"

But in the crowded little town,
  Where each man sought his own,
Where none was ready to receive
  A guest who came unknown,
God's Rose of Love, full blossomed, lay
  On the world's heart of stone.

"There was no room!" But well we know
  The countryside was wide,
And simple folk had gladly lent
  The shelter there denied,
Nor feared to open humble doors
  That with them He might bide.

Yet in the crowded little town,
  Content with manger bed
And such scant welcome as He found,
  The Christ-child laid His head,
For David's Son to Bethlehem
  Must come, the prophet said.

Thou little, old-world shrine, how blest
  Thy name and fame since then!
We, too, are of the crowded town
  Where men press close on men—
And dare we say that there is room,
  If Christ should come again?

O crowded town! O crowded lives!
  Make clear a larger space!
Push back the thronging schemes, and still
  The noisy market place!
'Tis Christmas! He would enter in
  Who brings both truth and grace.

THE GOAL

'Twixt Bethlehem's dark walls I go
The star-lit way my feet have trod
Since childhood, and my steps are slow
Lest I should miss one stone I know,
For stones and stars all lead to God.

The door, at length; fast closed to keep
The Treasure safe—such wealth it hides!
Lo, here the star-crowned King abides,
As Shepherd, folded 'midst His sheep;
Here God to men His Son confides.

I would not knock, lest I arouse
His earliest sleep. Swing open, door!
Silence each footfall, earthen floor!
Walls, loose no echo, for ye house
Such Guest as none e'er held before!

Behold the manger, and the King!
Blest Mary's smile the aureole
Above His Brow—the woman-soul
Revealed in her sweet mothering.
God's Love, thus mirrored, is my goal!

God's Love the goal! Oh, stony street,
'Neath starry skies of wondrous blue,
Still year by year men search thee through
With loyal hearts and way-worn feet,
Their childhood's fealty to renew.

Still, through the ages, manhood bends
At this low-lintelled door to see
How God doth wear humanity!
Love Infinite with finite blends,
The Child its shrine eternally!

THE HOLY NIGHT

The lanthorn's flame flickers and fails,
  It has burned on long past its time:
O'er the fields where the starlight pales
  Rise the hills all hoary with rime.

But within, 'neath the casement sounds
  A stir as of wings o'er a nest;
The love of a Mother surrounds
  The sleep of the Babe on her breast.

O never was nestling so fair
  As the Child Who rests on the hay!
And never could baby compare
  With Him Who is bringing the Day!

How holy the moments and still!
  Sleep on, Little Babe, in Thy nest.
A strange star shines out o'er the hill,
  And angel wings spread o'er Thy rest.

THE CHRIST CHILD

I think He did not know the stable dim,
  Nor feel the manger cold;
In Mary's heart such love enfolded Him
  With light and warmth untold.

Nor seemed Earth silent after Heaven's praise
  Swept backward to the height;
His Mother's voice was music for His days
  And soothed His rest at night.

Not homesick for His angels' ministries,
  However far away,
He, smiling up into His Mother's eyes
  Made Heaven where He lay!

"THE GLORY OF THE LORD SHONE ROUND ABOUT THEM"

Began a faint soft glow,
Diffused, as thrown from far,
Warmer than moonlight, wider than a star,
Purer than sun on snow.

Then a slow-shaping core
Of light intense—of flame
That parted, gatewise—whence the Angel came,
Brighter than all before!

So stood a space, then spoke,—
And to the shepherds' sight
The glory thrilled with waves of rainbow light
Which on th' horizon broke!

THE GLAD TIDINGS

O shepherds, waken, where you lie
With flocks beneath the stars asleep!
I bring glad tidings from the sky
To call you from your quiet sheep.

A Saviour comes to men to-night;
A Little Babe in swaddling bands,
Half seen in the dim stable's light,
Is placed, God's Gift, in Mary's hands.

Softened with straw, the manger holds
The Baby Form of Mary's Son,
And closer than the swaddling folds
Her love wraps round her Little One.

O shepherds, hasten! Leave the field,
And seek the town where you may be
The first to find God's Love revealed;
The earliest His Son to see.

THE VISIT OF THE SHEPHERDS

With haste to Bethlehem we fare;
A sign the Angel gave us.
We seek within a manger there,
Wrapped close in swaddling bands with care,
The Child just born to save us.

Of David's kingly line is He,
A Virgin Mother tends Him.
We cannot tell why this should be,
A King to live as poor as we,
While angel care defends Him.

O King of men! O Baby sweet!
We bring Thee naught of treasure,
But one small lamb to warm Thy feet,
And shepherds' worship incomplete,
If such can give Thee pleasure.

The lamb is Thine—its Shepherd Thou,
Our Shepherd King we greet Thee!
O bid Thy birthday blessings now
Be ours as at Thy throne we bow,
The first to come and meet Thee.

BETHLEHEM'S STREET

How long ago, O narrow street,
Your echoes in the twilight bore
A muffled sound of journey-wearied feet,—
Soft parleyings—a closing door—
A woman's sigh!

As stars grew dim, the watchman's call,
Dawn's herald, rang in cadence sweet;
And nearing voices beat from wall to wall
With questions. Then, O list'ning street,
That little cry!

Years sped. Thro' woven shade and light,
Did He ne'er come, O blessed street,
To see where He was born that wondrous night?
How sang your echoes as His Feet
Passed slowly by!

"BLESSED"

When God one Woman above all would bless,
Against her breast a Little Child He laid,
Round Whom might circle all her tenderness.
Into her hands He gave the countless tasks
That wait on babyhood—the little things
Whose doing taxed her strength, and filled her days,
(Redeeming women's hands from idleness).
Upon her lips He set the notes of praise
Which mark such perfect service as He asks—
And, as they sounded, they were lullabies,
Soft sweetest croonings, as a Mother sings.
Before her feet He spread the way of Life,
And when she trod it, with a sweet surprise
She found it lay in one small Naz'reth home,
From room to room; its errands out and in
With quickened step when childish calls would come,
Then hushed and noiseless at the slumber time.
And in her heart God put the strength of love—
Love deep and true; yea, like His own, sublime!
Love that ne'er measured sacrifice or pain,
But only watched for opportunity.

Thus was one Woman blest by God, and she
Accepted God's own way of blessing her;
The Child upon her breast, the busied hands,
Lips consecrate to soothe the Child's alarms,
The steadfast feet to meet the new demands,
The love-filled heart—she took them, unafraid—
And, since, all call her "Blessed," as He said.

THE MOTHER OF JESUS

Close 'neath thy heart the heart of Jesus beat;
He was thine Own, and thou His Mother blessed.
Close to thy heart His childish heart found rest,
When night brought home His eager little feet
As fell the shades in Nazareth's quiet street.
Close to thy heart His loving heart was pressed,
And pulsed with thine, as thy dear hand caressed
His boyish brow, and felt His kisses sweet.

All Motherhood grew holier in thine.
Since Christ was born of thee our mothers are
Brought nearer Him. We find His love in theirs.
Their human hearts throbbed with the thrill divine,
As God, through them, brought each new soul from far,
To number with His children and His heirs.

"TO MEN OF GOODWILL"

No band of gentle children sweet
  Knelt clustered where He lay—
Rough housing for the little ones;
  A bleak, bare place to pray—
Yet He was there, the Gentlest Child,
  The Lord of Christmas Day.

Of all earth's womanhood but one
  Truehearted Woman shared
The vigil of His birthday morn;
  None but His Mother cared
The only bed to give Him space
  Was that the sheep had spared.

A man's hand, trained to saw and plane,
  His earliest needs supplied;
A man's strength set the manger there
  Close at the Mother's side;
A man, brave, patient, wise and calm
  Watched through the Christmastide.

To men the heavens open stood,
  Their thronging angels showing;
Men left their flocks to seek for God
  Just come within man's knowing;
A man's hand drew the latch that they
  Might see the World's Light glowing!

Men of the field, men of the town,
  For shepherds came, and kings,
With gifts of love, of gold, of pray'r,
  Unstinted offerings;
Men's hearts gave welcome to the Child
  Whose blessing Christmas brings!

THE MANGER

How can I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou didst make
Thy bed within the manger for my sake!
How can I praise Thee, that with straw 'twas spread,
The place deemed worthy for Thy Baby Head!
How can I bless Thee, that Thou didst not scorn
Such a poor shelter, such a spot forlorn!

For though as through long years each Christmas Day
Dost see Thy Church in glorious array;
Though to each Altar as unto a Throne
Thou comest Kinglike to be with Thine own;
Yet as Thou standest at my heart's low door
I can but thank Thee for that manger poor.

From heav'n to earth, from Altar-throne to me!
Lo, in my heart the stable's poverty.
Once more with Thy sweet condescension bless,
And of Thy Love forgive my emptiness!
Come, Dearest Lord, and I shall praise alway
My King Who once within the manger lay!

REVELATION

God in our midst hath set a Little Child.
Man, seeking God in nature, had not found
The love of Fatherhood in Him. The sound
Of the Child's voice—His beauty as He smiled—
Met swift response; man's longings vague and wild,
His crude desires, thus satisfied and crowned.
Were God's love such, like Him 'twould know no bound,
Yearning for all, though truant and exiled.

And still, O Holy Child, that love we learn
First at the manger-throne, before Thee kneeling.
Oft as, disheartened, seeking Thee we turn,
Thy touch to dust-dimmed eyes gives sight and healing.
Children ourselves, once more, we can discern
And reach the Father's love through Thy revealing.

THE CHRISTMAS-TREE'S PARABLE

What a parable we see
In the shining Christmas-tree!
Not alone the stars that glimmer,
Nor the tinsel strands ashimmer;
Even more than taper's glory
Is its message and its story;
Listen, for the fir-tree brings
News of yet more wondrous things.

God a tiny seed did sow
On the mountain side to grow,
Set it deep that it might be,
In the after years, a tree—
Tall and stately it should rise
Till it towered to the skies.
God the Father placed it there
In His work to have a share.

Then when years had sped away
There drew near one Christmas Day,
And the tree so tall and straight
Felt it could no longer wait.
'Twas the time, it knew full well,
That its story it must tell—
Be a symbol and a sign
Of the Father's Love Divine.

So its trunk, both strong and true,
Of the Christ now speaks to you;
From such tiny seed upspringing,
Strength and hope to all men bringing.
Thus the Christ-child grew, that He
Saviour of the world might be.

Branches from all sides that start,
Nourished by the tree's great heart,
These would tell of lives which go
Far and wide, that all may know
Christ the Tree of Life, once set
In Bethlehem, and spreading yet.

Branches with their golden store,
These remind us more and more
How Christ's messengers still bear
Gift's of God's Love everywhere;
For such blessèd fruits can grow,
Only where the Christ they show.

And the tapers—what are they?
Children's hearts on Christmas Day,
Lighted by the Christ-child's Hands,
Shining out in all the lands.
Near and far the radiance brightens
Till the whole world it enlightens.

This the parable we see
In the shining Christmas tree.

TO YOU AND ALL MANKIND

Once more it is the blessed night
  Whose darkness blazed, whose silence broke,
When, circled with celestial light,
  God's Angel to the Shepherds spoke.
To-night again the children sing,
The Angel's message echoing:
  "Glad tidings of great joy I bring
  To you and all mankind!"

How great a gladness wraps us round
  And shines athwart the passing years
From Him, once by the Shepherds found,
  In Whom the Father's love appears;
Whose birth to-night our children sing,
The Angel's message echoing:
  "Glad tidings of great joy I bring
  To you and all mankind!"

Yet, lo, remote, through years long-drawn,
  Has brooded darkness undispelled
O'er lands where burns no Christmas dawn—
  O'er lives, their heritage withheld—
O'er children who ne'er learned to sing,
Nor caught the distant echoing
  Of tidings which great joy shall bring
  To them and all mankind.

When once God's Angel spoke to men
They sought the Saviour, as he said,
And found the signs all true, and then
Made haste the joyous word to spread,
Till even children came to sing,
The Angel's message echoing:
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind!"

But still those other children wait,
Untaught as yet the Christmas song.
Is it God's Angel who is late?
Oh, whose delay has done such wrong
That they have never learned to sing?
Hark, how our homes are echoing:
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind!"

THE JOURNEY TO EGYPT

The way is long,
O Mother of my Lord,
And dark the hours as speeds the night;
Across the path the hostel's light
Shines through the shelt'ring gates,
But not for us it waits.
O Mother of my Lord,
The way is long.

Calm sleeps the Babe
Upon thy bosom pressed.
Grieve not that flight must urge us on;
The Father's will still leads His Son;
The sword that pierces thee,
This sharp anxiety
Upon thy sweet soul pressed,
Wakes not the Babe.

Where now we go
Another child found grace,
Saved from the Pharaoh's dread decree,
A saviour for God's host to be.
So nurse thy Little One,
And dream the danger gone.
Thy Child shall thus find grace,
Where now we go.

There may we rest,
O Mother of my Lord,
Till God from Egypt call his Son,
And this our banishment is done;
Then Nazareth again
Shall give thee joy for pain,
O Mother of my Lord,
And we may rest.

THE CARPENTER

He stood, the Carpenter, within His shop,
With cedar sweet, with shavings strewn.
"Come, neighbor, see My finished work," said He,
"Share My rest at the noon!"

Cradle, and chair—a crutch—a staff—and, lo,
In the deep shade a coffin stood.
"I work for all," He said; "what each one needs
I fashion out of wood."

I mused upon His work, how He had formed
The cradle that a child might rest;
The broad, low chair, a mother's humble throne,
Since womanhood was blest;

The staff for yonder old man's faltering steps;
For a lame lad that crutch, just done;
This coffin, quiet bed for pilgrim worn,
Whose quest of Life is won.

"But for the men—what make you for strong men?"
The fragrant shop I scanned, at loss,
Until His eyes met mine. "For men—strong men?
For them I make a Cross!"

THE CROSS

"Greater love hath no man than this."

Lo, here, the lines of Love's supremest test;
Man's gauge, which God accepts and deigns to meet,
Its length, breadth, depth and height, complete.
The bourn of the Good Shepherd's tireless quest;
The pole to fix man's gaze, sin-stung, distrest;
Sign of that triumph which the Saints repeat;
The pledge of perfect service—hands and feet,
Head, heart, in one great cause by Christ imprest.

O wondrous Sign! Yet all inadequate
To measure that Immeasurable Love!
So God interprets for our finite powers,—
Holds back the Infinite and bids it wait
Till we by our own scale His Love may prove,
While He, by the same lines, makes test of ours.

THE GARDEN

Where the many footsteps trod
  Bearing Him to rest,
Rise faint odors from the sod—
  Bruised the Garden's breast.

Strewn with dew, like shining tears,
  Safe the Garden keeps
In its heart the hope of years
  While the Saviour sleeps.

Ere the morn can tinge the gloom,
  Thrills the night with power!
Empty is the Garden's tomb!
  Joy has claimed its hour!

Where the heavy footsteps trod,
  Where the stone was rolled,
Angels of the Living God
  Have His Rising told.

Strewn with dew, like jewels clear,
  All the Garden waits,
For the Risen Lord draws near
  Through the open gates.

Lo, He blesses as He stands
  Where His rest was sweet!
Blesses with His Piercèd Hands
  Blossoms at His Feet!

Whispers of a Garden where
Living waters rise;
Faithful souls His rest shall share
In His Paradise.

Where the painful footsteps trod
Opens He the way—
He who is that Garden's God
Makes it ours to-day.

THE ANGEL OF THE RESURRECTION

Among the shadows where He left, as sign,
The folded grave-clothes lying in their place,
Thou cam'st with radiance of celestial grace,
Message of cheer and tenderness benign:
Learned of man's toil in filling God's design
As the great stone resisted for a space;
Learned of man's tears—those tears on Mary's face,
Which God need never wipe from eyes like thine.

Wouldst thou indeed look into things like these—
The common, daily things which He hath borne,
Whose empty tomb thou guardest in the morn?
Couldst understand such bitter ministries?
Yet gaze, and learn how, toil and tears o'erpast,
Man wins the victory o'er death, at last!

"WHEN IT WAS YET DARK"

S. John 20:1.

How early Love awakes to nurse its grief!
Nor waits for light, yet feels the dawning nigh,
And, through the darkness stealing forth, would try,
Outstripping day, to render night more brief.
Thus Mary in her sorrow seeks relief,
Her thoughts all turned where in one garden lie,
Storm-bent and broken, hopes that grew so high—
The Master's hopes, bruised, wounded past belief.

So comes she hither ere the East grows gray,
Nor sees but terror in the rolled-back stone;
Grasps but one truth—the greater yet unknown—
And swift to tell His loved ones speeds away.
O Love, poor Love, what anguish is thine own!
How long the dawning of thine Easter Day!

MARY OF MAGDALA

She came ere dawn that she might weep alone,
And, lo, the stone
Displaced, appeared the throne
Of a great shining one, who spake and said:
"He whom thou seek'st is risen from the dead!"

Uncomforted
By the great pledge of Life, she turned away—
Turned, and yet tarried, vigil still to keep,
And heard Another say,
In tender query: "Wherefore dost thou weep?"
Her instant plea bespeaks her heart's behest:
"O tell me where, if Thou hast borne Him hence,
That thither all my grief and penitence
May carry balming spices for His rest!"

"Mary!" Ah, surely One dear Voice alone
Thrills with that tone!

"Rabboni!" Yea, she sees Him standing there,
The sunlight glorying about His hair,
Where all the lilied paths converge, and sweet
The humbler flowers bend closer to His feet,
And on His lips the triumph-smile,
Calm, yet half-tremulous, with gladness born of pain,
Like golden sunrise after rain—
So stands He there where He had slept erstwhile.

Their alabaster buds the lilies break
For fresh anointing,
And in the bending trees the birds awake
Chorales of His appointing;
Roses in sudden bloom their censers swing
With odours redolent;
Life's Gospel waits interpreting—
And part for her is meant!

Over against our graves He stands to-day,
The Risen Master glorious,
And in His own blest way
Calls us to share
His Easter joy victorious.
Still standing there,
The Garden's beauty fragrant all around Him,
His Angel says: "The Lord is risen indeed!"
But He, in those same paths where Mary found Him,
Ever the same
To meet each heart's extremest need,
Calls to us each by name.

THE RESURRECTION

In Joseph's Garden.

Silence is here.
The garden lies so still,
The rose holds fast its dew
For very fear
Its fall would rouse an echo.
'Tis the Great Sabbath
'Tis God's resting day;
And the huge stone
Keeps vigil, sealed and sure.
Yes, that is Joseph's tomb,
And there, alone,
They laid the Master when His work was done.
After the wounds, the ointment;
Linen bands to bind
The scars of scourging;
Napkin smooth to wind
His thorn-vexed brow.
After the tumult, peace—
The Peace of God!
He was the Prince of Peace.
Is this His realm,
This silent kingdom, His?
The soldiers watch, but they are silent, too.
Is such, indeed, the gift of Peace He gave?
Surely, once He said:
"I am the Resurrection and the Life"—
Yet there is Calvary,
And here is Jesus' Grave!

The silence breaks,
The leaves meet whisp'ringly
Moved by the wind.
It almost seems
That Breath Divine, which quickens man
And so a Prophet makes.
'Tis but the breathing of the dawn,
Night's sigh on Morning's breast.
Hark! There are words!
"Thou wilt not leave in hell
My soul, nor let
Thy Holy One corruption see."
But what a day,
Could morning prove His claim!
Did He not say
The third day He would rise?
Why, in an hour, that day is here!
"I am the Resurrection," so He said—
What of the stone, the cerements, the seal?
What of the soldiers set to guard the Dead?
Yet the Centurion who witnessed all
Said: "Verily, He was the Son of God."
Remember, He called Lazarus from death:
Who may call Him?
Alas! it was His voice, and that is still.

There is the wind astir,
And 'tis once more
Laden with words:
"I laid Me down in peace
And rose again:
The Lord sustained Me!" There is the new hope,
The rising from that sleep.
What may it mean?

Let us go hence,—
Back to Emmaus,
Where we still may keep
This dream of ours.
The Sabbath nears its end,
We dare not longer wait, nor watch.
How can it be?
"In three days I will raise this temple up:"
"The sign of Jonas has been given you:"
Those were His words.
I knew Him—was His friend—
Yet I can understand them not.
We look for dawn, whose light the truth may show,
But night is with us still—
Let us go home!
That is His Grave, we know.
The guard approaches—come!

Emmaus.

Can I forget that hour!
Ere we had reached the city gate
The Sabbath ended, and we came upon
Two of the women stealing, ghostly, forth.
The darkness seemed to lift.
Then came a cry—
A sudden sound of feet,
A passing shape, a sob—
"The tomb is empty! They have borne Him thence!"
And Mary Magdalene
Sped by with the strange tale.
Almost at once
There was a clank of steel, and swift
There passed a guard.

Then as we turned, the other Mary came
And told us more—
An angel vision in the sepulchre—
A message! "He is risen, as He said!"
We found the stone rolled back,
And in the place
Where they had laid the Lord, an angel sat,
With the same word.
All seemed a dream—
A dream unreal, in the cold gray light—
Soon we might waken, and its lines dispel.
But day brought nothing else:
Only the empty tomb
More empty still with the great angel gone;
No word, no sight of Him whom we had loved.
If this third day were His,
To show His pow'r
Why had He not appeared?
Why came He not to speak and comfort us,—
To say once more:
"I am the Resurrection and the Life?"
"The Resurrection!" Not as we had hoped,
To see, and hear, and know
As we had known;—
To be with Him, as in the days of yore,—
If He had risen, we were left alone.
We toward Emmaus turned,
The one great thought
Ruling our speech;
The weight of loneliness bound fast
And crushing us.
You know the rest—
The Traveller Whom we met;
The wise sweet converse on the dusty way;
Our strange home-coming ere the evening fell.

He was our guest.
How were we blind, to know Him not!
Yet I would journey through the whole broad
earth
To taste such joy again;
For as we sat at meat
His Eucharist revealed Him there.
The soft low words
Which in the upper room had blessed before,
Now told us all—
O Jesu! Master! Thou wast ours once more!
Though, as we fell to worship at His feet
He vanished, we were not afraid—
We were no longer sad,
For He was ours.
At last we understood—
He was the Resurrection,—yes!
And He, the Bread of Life!
It was the third day, and His word was true.

"HIS SERVANTS SHALL SERVE HIM"

In memory of Allen Kendall Smith

Priest and Pastor.

Of the souls that are Mine (and the Master smiled)
Whom I gave into your care
To lead, and nurture, and make them strong,
To wash them and keep them fair,
I have known how you made their burdens yours,
How you lifted them in your prayer.

And the service you loved, so bravely done,
Is your service still to do,
With the heartache and disappointment gone
And only the joy running through;
For the souls you helped are forever yours,
While the old work becomes the new.

It is yours to watch as the souls come in,
By the Garden's gate to stand,
For some will be glad as they catch your smile,
Glad for your welcoming hand;
The children you signed with the sign of the Cross
Will be seeking this peaceful land.

The men whom you fed with the Bread of Life,
Who quickened their steps on the way;
And the women whose hearts you touched with praise
As you brightened the lagging day
By the tears you dried, and the hope you gave;
Your compassion on those astray.

Yes, souls from afar, whom you never knew
Save as you have gazed with Me
Across the great reaches of the world,
Across the isle-studded sea,
And shared in My thirst for the souls I love
Wherever they may be.

And so, from the Gate of Paradise,
As the souls come in on their quest,
It is yours to bring of your own to Me,
Until each one I have blest,
In the midst of the Garden, 'neath the trees,
Where the river whispers of rest.

THE PATH TO THE MORNING

I follow it in shade, between the trees.
Close by its edge there bloom the small sweet things
That have made beautiful a thousand Springs;
Hepaticas, and wood anemones,
And violets, and wee ferns half unrolled,
Like hopes scarce spoken, promises half told.

And I am ever moving toward the sun!
Where the path turns there fluttered out of view
A little Child, and after her she drew
The beauty of the Morning just begun:
A little Sunrise-Child, glad, pure, and sweet—
Hands full of flow'rs, and dew upon her feet.

And as the old world turns I know that she
Is ever with the Morning! In her hair
The glint of sunshine woven fine and fair;
The breeze to waft her laughter happily.
'Tis mine to follow where the shade is spread;
Where Springtide waked the posies 'neath her tread.

Afar, between the trees that arch the way
Her little dancing form I seem to trace—
Her smile shines out across the woodland space,
A sunbeam,—lest perchance my footstep stray.
Then, though the path reach on, I walk content;
It leads into the Morning, where she went!

PARADISE

I thought it was a distant place
'Neath far off skies,
And, lo, I find that at my door
God's Garden lies!

I had not often looked that way,
Though cool and sweet;
Life's duties bade me walk instead
The busy street,

Until my little baby's hand
Slipped into mine,
And drew me where the Garden's flow'rs
Grew fair and fine.

It was so near, so calm, so safe,
I could but say:
"No one might choose a fairer spot
For her to play."

And so she stays there—it is near,
Just at my door!
The door is open, never closed
As heretofore.

And often at my work I pause
And look to see
How safe the Garden keeps the Child
So dear to me.

Soon will she know each shady path,
Each flower that grows—
Some day, her hand in mine, I'll find
How much she knows!

FORGETFULNESS

Thank God that He allows us to forget;
Forget our dreams of joy, too fair to last,
Forget our sorrows, and forget, when past,
Even the things we would remember yet.

Night's tears will leave the Morning's roses wet,
And shades of Winter on the Spring are cast—
But Time, with hand impartial, moving fast,
Blots out the former days and their regret.

Did we remember all that we have known,
Still dwelling on lost moments, we would rest,
And wounds—God knows how deep they were—had grown
Unbearable by hiding in our breast.
Lo, the Great Healer to console His own
Lets them forget. Forgetfulness is best.

REMEMBRANCE

I had forgotten last night's rain
  Till all the roadside pools grew bright,
And, where the thick white dust had lain,
  Made bits of heaven mine outright.

THE BELL-BUOY

I swing on the surge of the summer sea
And ring as the tide floods lazily.
Blue are the waters, blue is the sky;
Never a cloud, and the sun is high.
  On the long, slow swell
  Speaks my warning bell
Of the reef 'neath the surge of the summer sea.

  But the summer goes,
    And the sun is pale.
  The tempest blows
  And whirling snows
    Thicken the gale.

Ah, then, when the rush of the wind
  Fills the great world-house with its power,
In the breath of the storm I find
  My Pentecostal hour!
Wanting nor language nor speech
  My voice rings loud and far;
Its tones through the darkness reach
  To warn from the surf-beaten bar.
Yes, that is the force I love,
  The uplift of passion and praise,
The stress of the storm above,
  The strength of the sea to raise!
That is the hour I love,
  When the great waves roar and break;
When, moved by God's blast, I prove
  His servitor, strong for His sake!

SHADOWS

Do ye alone upon the surface lie,
  Unfelt within the deep?
Restless and foaming 'neath the chequered sky
  The sad sea fain would sleep,
Yet, weary, tosses, turning to and fro;
  While drifting, drifting, with strong onward
    sweep,
The shadows come and go.

Bend low, soft clouds, your tenderness reveal!
  How lovingly ye lean
Close down, once more the Mother-love to feel,
  Near the great heart whose keen
Deep-hidden sorrows, ye, her children share.
  Still mingling gloom with swift alternate sheen,
Ye show the sea most fair.

AN OLD GRAVEYARD BY THE SEA

Is it so long since they began their sleep,
Or just an hour of God's great day that seemed
An hundred years? And have they never dreamed
With faces toward the vastness of the deep,—
Dreamed of the watch which One had bid them keep
Till He should come? Across their rest has gleamed
Beauty of dawn, and sunset glory streamed,
And twilight crept, as now we see it creep.

Is it so long? The shadows lengthen slow,
The tide, incoming, moves the sedge, and free
A soft sweet westward breath begins to blow.
Let us take up their vigil tenderly—
Soon will He come! How once He came we know,
"In the fourth watch—walking upon the sea."

THE GOLDEN SAIL

Under the mist a-dreaming lay the sea.
The soft-lipped waves caressed the silent shore
In greeting and farewell. The stillness bore
No sound, save ever slowly, patiently,
A bell far distant tolled, and seemed to be
The echo of Time's passing evermore;—
Till, sudden, where 'twas blank and grey before,
A sail gleamed gold, bound homeward and to me!

What though the slumbrous sea, with dreams content,
Heed not the message of the tolling bell,
The hours will teach the tides their task as well;
And all my gaze upon that sail is bent.
It brings you nearer, Love! My dreams are past—
Nay, more—Fulfilled! For you are mine at last!

YESTERDAY

Yesterday's sun returns
  Making to-day more fair;
Yesterday's buds in bloom
  Spread sweetness everywhere.

Yesterday's half-learned song
  Is perfected to-day;
Yesterday's building birds
  In their treetop nest may sway.

Yesterday's memories, dear,
  Touch all, as the sun the dew,
And I see the world through a mist—
  A mist of longings for you!

The sunrise? That was when you raised your face
And smiled to find me smiling down at you.
The noon? 'Twas perfect day when your embrace
Stole round me and its circling warmth I knew.
The evening? Love, all darkness flees before
The lovelight which is ours forevermore.

"I NEED NO MISTLETOE"

When 'mid the Christmas tapers' happy burning,
As twilight calls the stars out one by one,
And your small head, upon my shoulder turning,
Is weary of the day so early done,

I need no mistletoe to hold above you
As warrant for my kisses, little maid—
Your Mother freely says that I may love you,
And with her blessing who need be afraid?

I need no mistletoe with holly twining
To work for us its fabled old-world charms—
With sweet content your Mother's eyes are shining
And you—you're fast asleep within my arms.

CONSTANCE

(*Aged 5*)

A little maiden with deep earnest eyes,
Lips touched with smiles, then suddenly sedate
To frame with care quaint phrases learned of late;
A very child, brave, questioning and wise,—
Her life a game, with many a surprise,
Where those just come their elders imitate.
Impatient for new birthdays does she wait,
With dreams of what in 'grown-up' years there lies.

Dear little girl, play at Life's game *to-day*,
And let the birthdays keep their lazy will.
How blue the sky is, and the sun how bright;—
How sweet the flowers all along the way;—
And how the brook slips laughing down the hill!
Why, time's too long to *count* 'twixt dawn and night!

In morning's colors I'd her portrait trace:
Sunbeams, like spirits, nestle in her hair,
And fashion smiles for her sweet lips to wear,
As they caress her little flower-like face.
And what dear warmth in her small arms' em-
brace
Making me glad her wealth of love to share,
Whose soul of sweetness, clad in form as fair,
Has moved beside me for these six years' space!

And when she speaks, the little lisp I love
Hovers above each S, as buzzing bee,
Or humming-bird with whirring wings, above
Some honeyed blossom. And it seems to me
I'm jealous of each change the years must bring—
Not for the summer would I lose the spring!

HOME

(In Memory of A. H. G.)

The shaded room, and, in the same low chair,
The brave, bright woman, learning to forego
The things she loved—careful that none should know
Weight of the chain which held her always there.

Her heart's long garnered sunshine glad to share,
And blessing life with her life's overflow—
Whose voice but hers could speak its welcome so!
What other room with her room could compare!

This is the Home which memory makes mine,
Inalienably mine, forevermore.
I mount its stairs, and at her open door
I pause as at the entrance of a shrine.
This cannot change, nor pass—it will endure.
Here centers Love—like God's—undying, sure!

Bright'ning the day her cheery courage shone!
Clear in perception, well she understood
Through power bought by pain of Motherhood,
The man's soul, as the boy's. She held alone
In subtle grasp the life which shared her own.
Hers was the blessèd comfort that could brood
With long-kept patience over strivings crude,
Seeing in hope Right crowned, Wrong overthrown.

"So will I comfort you!" O Mary's Son,
Who in Thy Mother's arms hast sought to hide
The passing griefs of Childhood one by one;
At nightfall safely sheltered by her side,—
Deep grows the twilight of a day just done;
So comfort *us*, this lonely eventide!

GUARDIAN ANGELS

Upon the Father's Face our gaze is bent,
Learning what Love such Fatherhood bestows,
Ere He shall bid us spread our wings o'er those
To whom His guardian hosts are ever sent.
Each to some ministry of love is lent,
To succour some strong soul beset by foes;
To solace where the Cross its shadow throws;
To cheer the laggard on life's long ascent.

O souls of men! Though pass the earthly years
In sight of God you stand His children, still.
He, through the "Holy, Holy, Holy!" hears
The murmur of "Our Father!" as you fill
Time with the voicing of your hopes and fears,
And we, His Angels, guard you at His Will.

THE ANGEL OF LONELINESS

(*The Angel's Voice*)

Across the crystal of the holy sea,
Up to the glory of the sapphire throne,
I look, and yearn for what I have not known.
I long the Father's messenger to be,
To watch o'er some child-soul all tenderly,
And whisper secrets meant for it alone,—
Echoes of One Great Voice, the Father's tone:
"Suffer My little ones to come to Me!"

Must there forever be a silence where
That child-voice should have sounded? Angel praise
Waits for the song the Innocents repeat;
Yet in that holy band I have no share!
Then Father, bid me walk the earthly ways
To comfort hearts where kindred longings beat!

"SOME FELL BY THE WAYSIDE"

I see the field, and follow with my eye
The trodden path, where some with careless feet
First scarred the soil; where many steps repeat
Their heedlessness, or worse, till hard and dry
Its barren track; and still the footsteps ply
Their busy way, through dust and noonday heat.
What if the Sower they should chance to meet—
Will they remember as they hurry by?

Lord, help *me* to remember, as I go
On frequent errands passing to and fro,
Lest I grow careless where I tread to-day;
Lest I Thy field with wilful step deface,
And good soil, trampled, yield the seed no place
When from Thy Hand it falls beside the way!

THE PILLAR IN THE QUARRY NEAR BAALBEK

In the still quarry lies the task complete,—
The single shaft which the great temple lacked;
Yonder its fallen fellows, scarred and cracked,
Declare Time's triumph and man's sure defeat.
The living rock holds in secure retreat
The perfect work, its sculptured grace intact—
Unused, and yet its beauty might attract
Praise from the past which men should yet repeat.

Useless? O soul, the lesson is thine own.
The falling strokes, heavy with loss and pain,
Are shaping thee, as skilled hand shaped that stone.
'Tis an old parable, yet learn again
How to be beautiful for God alone—
Apart, not useless. God ne'er wrought in vain.

AN AUGUST SUNDAY

(For an Autograph Kalendar)

How well I fancy what this Sunday sees!
The dear old road, broad-patched with sun and
shade,
(An early show'r the summer dust has laid)—
The little Church beneath its clust'ring trees
Whose doors and windows all invite the breeze.
The bells at nine their loud appeal have made
That all by service time may be arrayed,
For mortals don their best on days like these.

Then the slow moving groups—the bells again—
And then, the Sunday air more sweetly stirred.
The organ sounds in long familiar strain,
And voices join in long familiar word:
"O day of rest and gladness!" So I see
This August day, whose page would speak of me.

BLUEBIRDS

It seemed that April skies had lent their blue
To paint the busy wings which fluttered near,
As these forerunners of a happy year
Inspected all the hedge, and gaily flew
In search of covert spots, where they anew
Might build their cosy homes, and never fear
Lest boyish hands should suddenly appear,
Nor travelers, "cutting 'cross lots," should break
through.

We do not mark our years by bloom, but blight,
And trace our way by footprints in the snow;
Our days begin and end in hours of night.
The bluebirds choose the fairest time they know
To wreathe their Kalendar with blossoms white,
And through its pages floating petals blow.

ROGATION

We wait and ask! The seed has all been sown;
Deep in the furrow life begins to move,
Broad blossomed boughs make white the hills above,
And drifting petals by the soft winds blown
Sweep subtle fragrance o'er fresh fields unmown.
We wait till time the harvest hope shall prove;
We ask the fruitful sunshine of God's love,
His showers and dew which other years have known.

We wait and ask! Those deeper furrows, Lord,
Hide the blest seed planted with many tears,
When shall the new life touch them at Thy word?
We wait fruition of these silent years;
We ask with human longing, love restored—
Love's fulness,—their's in Thine and Thine in their's.

THE GOLDEN ROAD

A Sequence
of
Sonnets for The Fiftieth Anniversary
of
St. Stephen's College

THE ROAD

Can you not see, as in the long ago,
The curving road, with Autumn splendor bright,
An avenue ablaze with golden light!
'Gainst the blue sky the golden branches glow,
And golden largess on the ground bestow,
As the trees drop their treasure left and right.
What lavish beauty for our careless sight—
Where else shall we such shining pathways know!

So through the curving avenue of years
We who once trod that path of golden leaves
Turn Motherwards again; and, lo, appears
Decked with such cloth of gold as memory weaves,
The road, which to its travelers still gives
Those golden days in which their boyhood lives!

As a brave Mother in her place she stands
  Fronting the steadfast hills with dauntless
    eyes—
  Those hills beyond whose wall there waiting lies
Toil turned to privilege at Love's commands,
For which she girds her sons with earnest hands,
  Ere they go forth on their high enterprise.
  She is as patient as the years, and wise
With Motherhood to answer their demands.

Amid her younger sons, with arms outspread
  And lips that smile a welcome, waits to-day
The College, as the golden road we tread,
  Her sons who long, long years have been away;
For each her heart its greeting has prepared—
His faults forgiven, and his honors shared.

He must be here. 'Twas here he gave his best,
His life and love to foster and sustain
Through long, hard days. And love and life
remain
In all the fabric of the past exprest,
For all the future a foundation blest.
O great, kind heart, and clear well-balanced
brain,
How many lives your impress shall retain,
The Warden's legacy, and rich bequest!

Dear, true old man! Whose pleasure 'twas to
mould
Our cruder years with hopeful touch and strong,
To you what laurels and what praise belong!
Yet more than these in rev'rent hands behold;
Love that outlasts mere time—aye, love we
bear,
And crown of blessings for your silver hair.

Perchance, like Jacob wrestling, here we won
Whatever of the Israel we claim.
Here our dream-ladder as upsoaring flame
Rose heavenward, and angels walked thereon.
And still we pray, nor is the vision gone,
Though neither pray'r nor vision be the same.
'Tis the same Altar where of old we came,
And here to-day we meet the Holy One.

We pray for pow'r indeed, though not as when
Our younger pray'rs were framed, for pow'r to sway:
But, that our brothers we may help each day.
And if the vision-ladder rise as then
'Tis no mere dream of service it declares—
As men for men we climb God's Altar-stairs.

COMMENCEMENT

Glad voices ring, and many footsteps sound
  Along the road to-day, and forms we love
  Come into sight again, as quick we move
To stand with them on long-familiar ground.
How many come! Yet some are nowhere found,
  Whom distance bars, or claims of duty prove;
  And some, God's fadeless day enwraps above,
Whose faithful work by perfect rest is crowned.

O golden road! Your leaves to pages turn
  On which our Book of Life is written clear,
  Whose record brings us to this Golden Year.
From them the roll-call of the past we learn,
  And as we read, the vacant places fill—
  None absent now—here, all are living still!

There could have been no pang in that benumbing,
The slowly creeping chill which wrapt the frame,
So motionless and easily succumbing,
And losing all alarm
While yielding to the charm
That soothed and calmed and stole away the pain
For all eternity, and left a peace
Which nevermore would cease.

All restlessness forever done away;
All anxious thought and terror blotted out;
The pain of night, the toil of weary day
Forgotten and unknown
By the cool patient stone,
To which thou didst transform in one brief glance,
Whence peace arose, and ruled all absolute,
Unmoved, unquestioned, mute.

No pain, no tears, no thirst! Why did they
shrink
Or hide their faces from thy Gorgon gaze?
Why did men falter, or their courage sink?

* * * * * *

O dream of perfect rest,
Thou hast my thought possest;
To feel the quieting, the blest relief,
Absorb all anguish I had known before,
And then—to feel no more!

* * * * * *

O longing worse than vain! How faith in scorn
Rejects thy dead allurements, while the Face
That "turned and looked on Peter" thro' the morn
One look of love bestows,
And all impatience grows
Submissive to the lesson taught by pain.
One look! The darkness lightens, grief grows blest,—
That sunrise brings us rest.

YEARNING

Not that the past I would bring back again,
Live o'er again
The days which lie behind the walls of pain:
The newer melody may lack the charm,
The sweetness, the ineffable content
With the remembered music always blent,
And yet I would not ask to still retain
The loved refrain.

Not that once more my lips I would impress
To half express
My love in one close lingering caress;
Peering thro' darkness faintly I discern
The darling features fading from my sight,
Yet rather hidden by the deepest night
Than shining clear above me as before
To half adore.

Lonely I go. Time cannot heal that grief,
Nor the belief
That my great loss to her but meant relief.
Were the world empty as her empty room,
And could a word refill it with her smile
I would be silent. For a little while
In emptiness and loneliness I dwell,
And it is well.

Beyond the dawn of Paradise I see
Awaiting me
All the old love made new; the same, yet free
From anxious thought, from care, from chance
of change.
With lips ne'er curved in pain she stands and
sings,
In hands unwearied bloomy garlands brings,
And loves me still, as in the dreamy past
Which could not last.

Yearning for all that made day clear and bright,
The golden light
Now shed no more across my wind-swept night,
I seek it not in the old paths once trod.
In life beyond life, with its strong new breath,
Life where eternal Love has vanquished death,
There shall I find her. For that hour I wait
Though soon or late.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

The lessening distance stirs beneath the breath
Of glad winds, laden with sweet triumph-strains,
Blown from God's garden, o'er the gulf of Death.

List, the new voices learning the great hymn!
Hear the petitions in sweet undertone—
Our own names spoken in that country dim.

Thus is the welcome ready ere we come;
Those prayers unfailing keep us steadfast still,
While we, in battle, plead for those at Home.

Father of all, we would the triumph share!
Open Thy garden gates! As we draw near
Show us Thyself among the loved ones there.

"A SPIRITUAL HOUSE."

1 S. Peter ii : 5.

Slow, as the years depart,
Thy Temple walls arise,
Builded of stones, each one prepared apart,
Fashioned through sacrifice.

Shaped by the hammer's blow,
Finished with chisel keen,
Each one made true, as He alone may know
Who has each motion seen.

Fitted to fill its place,
Noiseless each stone is set,
And the vast building rises into space
Above earth's jar and fret.

Finish Thy work we pray,
Pillar and arch complete!
Use us to fill whatever place we may;
Build with us, we entreat!

Whether as corners bright
We in the Temple shine;
Or from some pinnacle reflect the light
Caught from the Light Divine;—

If 'neath Thy Throne, perchance,
Hidden we may be laid;
Or from the pavement learn th' adoring glance
Of those in white arrayed;—

Builded both strong and sure
May we be one with Thee!
In such communion, stablished and secure,
We satisfied shall be.

AN OCTOBER VIOLET

Under October skies,
  Found at my feet,
One tiny blossom lies
Smiling at my surprise,
  Piquant and sweet.

"Violet, whence are you
  Here in the grass?
Love's service must you do,
Waiting as token true,
  Someone to pass?

"Is not Love meant for Spring?
  Why do you stay?
Who keeps you lingering
Through all this blustering
  Autumnal day?"

"'Tis for you that I wait and I smile;
  Far away I could hear as you came,
And the wind, as it rested awhile,
  Has whispered me more than your name.

"'Tis for you I am waiting just here,
  I have something to tell you—stoop down,
I would murmur it into your ear—
  Break my stem—I am your's now—your own.

"For your questions I have a reply.
  No, I say, Love is not for the Spring;
Though its objects may alter or die
  Love itself is more stable a thing.

"Love is strong and endures, so I wait
Till my message you hear and accept.
'Tis God's Love that prevails, and not Fate,
Though Its reasons are secrets long kept.

"Love is not for the Spring, tho' new-born
In the mingling of sunshine and rain,
It lives on through the Autumn of scorn
Where its violets greet you again."

Under October skies
Low at my feet,
Bidding my heart arise
Brave to its destinies,
Hope did I meet.

In that heart's centre deep
Treasured secure,
Flower and lesson keep
Watch o'er my Love asleep—
Love to endure.

TO THE "PRIMULA FORBESI"

You never knew a shady woodland nook,
Nor held sweet converse with the birds and bees;
Ne'er from your stem the daring spider shook
His filmy pirate flag to catch the breeze,
And some unwary fly to trap and tease.

There in your little greenhouse world you dwelt,
Content and happy in the warmth and light;
Never a blast of chilling fortune felt,
Nor dreamed an atmosphere where frost could
blight,
Or snails and beetles startle and affright.

Secure you loved your tiny social sphere,
Your proud position in that favored spot,
Your friendship with the orchids blooming near;
And you applauded every deep-laid plot,
Lest one ambitious weed should touch your pot.

Tell me as smiling you begin the day,
Are you unspoiled by friends so great and grand?
O Primula! You turn your eyes away!
The palm extends a sympathetic hand:
You need not answer—I can understand.

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